

Reviews

Hitler's Tanks: German Panzers of World War II by Chris McNab; New York, NY: Osprey Publishing; 2020, 336 pages; \$40 hard cover.

Hitler's Tanks is Dr. Chris McNab's latest offering in military-history writing. An author of more than 100 other publications, McNab is an expert on analyzing individual weapons systems and their performance in combat.

Before this review, I was unfamiliar with his previous work and therefore anticipated yet another coffee-table book replete with beautiful photographs but lacking detail. However, the depth and breadth of research involved in writing this book made for quite a surprise. Readers, particularly researchers, modelers or re-enactors, looking for a detailed examination of German armor during World War II should strongly consider adding ***Hitler's Tanks*** to their home library.

McNab opens with a look back at the early days of German tank and armored doctrine development in the Great War as a foundation to understanding their use and continued evolution during World War II. This theme continues as a backdrop in later chapters that describe the path from blueprint to battlefield for individual tank models. The book provides specification data for the major German tanks – the Panzer series, the ubiquitous Panther and the massive King Tiger – describing the weight, dimensions, armor, armament, communications and power plant. In keeping with Osprey Publishing tradition, each chapter includes many period photographs of the tanks as well as detailed cutaway full-color illustrations revealing more internal or external details.

McNab is clearly not a believer in the supremacy of either German tanks or strategic-level decision-making. The author joins the growing chorus of researchers seeking to dispel the myth of Nazi armored supremacy, particularly highlighting the Wehrmacht's rather inferior tanks at the war's start and the overly complex designs in the Third Reich's final moments.

Individual chapters studying each tank describe virtually every facet possible from combat performance against Allied tanks, such as the Russian T-34 or American Sherman, to more obscure analysis, such as crew comfort on the move or even the placement of individual switches and buttons necessary to operate the vehicles. Rarely have I encountered a book with so much attention paid to the smaller elements of a weapons system.

Hitler's Tanks is rich in detail but written in a dry, matter-of-fact, official-report style with little in the way of an engaging narrative. The book is more akin to a U.S. Army -10 series technical manual than a war story. The humanity of war, as told through discussion of the tank crewmembers themselves, makes all-too-brief appearances. While the book is about the machines, I believe more writing on the men would improve its overall appeal.

LTC CHRIS HEATHERLY

Wellington's Command: A Reappraisal of His Generalship in The Peninsula and At Waterloo by G.E. Jaycock; Yorkshire, United Kingdom: Pen and Sword Books Ltd.; 2019; 264 pages; \$42.95.

G.E. Jaycock's ***Wellington's Command*** is a critical assessment of the Duke of Wellington's leadership during the Napoleonic Wars era through the lens of the mission-command philosophy. Jaycock proposes that Wellington's leadership, despite notable victories such as Waterloo, deserves a reappraisal and that history and the favorable narrative surrounding his generalship have been too generous. Jaycock gives the legendary general a thorough review with a book that has a scholarly style and in-depth analysis of battles won and lost. The reader can infer several lessons relevant for application in the art of leadership with a mission-command mindset more than 200 years later.

Wellington's Command is the adaptation of Jaycock's master's thesis into a publishable work. The academic origin and original reading audience are noticeable in the strict scholarly style of ***Wellington's Command***, making the book a challenging read for the armchair historian. Jaycock provides an exhaustive level of detail and analysis that can be overwhelming at times. The analysis is generally at the tactical level and describes the nuanced activities of Napoleonic-era battles such as the sequence of selecting and setting the battlefield, the disposition of artillery and

commitment of the cavalry. The depth of detail in evidence adds confidence to the veracity of the author's research but comes at the cost of reading ease.

Also, Jaycock tends to provide many details but makes few strong conclusions. The transitions between argument, evidence and claims often occur abruptly and are easy to gloss over. He also favors the use of the counter-factual, or what-if, method in his supplementing the arguments – i.e., what Wellington could've done or what could've been if done differently. These ideas are logically consistent with his own thesis but hard for the reader to critically refute.

Wellington's Command follows a mostly chronological outline with a brief history of Wellington's military career, the Peninsula Campaign 1808-1814, the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and commentary on his enduring legacy. The first chapter introduces the popular Wellington narrative and legacy, as well as the dynamic between political and military offices to social standings. Here is proffered the book's thesis suggesting Wellington's generalship has been appraised too generously.

Jaycock uses the second chapter to describe how Wellington organized his command and executed his generalship using thematic sections comparable to U.S. Army warfighting functions. The next three chapters focus on Wellington's command and generalship during the Peninsula Campaign (United Kingdom-led alliance against France on the Iberian Peninsula, 1808-1814). These chapters serve as the core of the author's evidence for supporting the thesis. Here also is the book's true value as an excellent case study of a multinational coalition campaign, including cooperation with guerrilla forces, against a capable adversary in a minor or secondary theater.

The second to last chapter is an abridged account of the action and leadership during the Battle of Waterloo. This chapter serves to conclude the author's main argument and demonstrates how applied mission command would have contributed to better battlefield decisions and fewer casualties. The Waterloo chapter and the conclusion come off as a bit rushed relative to the scope and detail of Peninsula Campaign and is somewhat underwhelming.

The book concludes with the proposition that the quality of Wellington's leadership has been carefully crafted through his own close management of subordinates, exaggerated because of key victories won, and not attributable to any personal leadership quality or essence.

The book endeavors to illustrate how Wellington's overbearing and micromanaging leadership style cost him, and subordinates, opportunity for success and initiative on the battlefield. Ostensibly, this work should serve a professional-reading purpose to reinforce the philosophy of mission command. However, the book better serves as a case study of leadership. The book suggests that Wellington's style was forged by experiences, but he was static and didn't adapt or grow with increased responsibility, new operating environments or multinational partners. The student of mission-command philosophy will benefit from the comparative study and Jaycock's exhortations.

Wellington's Command is a difficult but rewarding read for the serious or aspiring historian and any student of the period looking for excellent secondary source material. The book doesn't provide a lot of pretextual information – a basic knowledge of the period is assumed – but not necessary to digest the content. ***Wellington's Command*** does offer analysis of mission-command leadership affecting battlefield performance, but the lessons are hard to extract and not easily communicable in a contemporary context. Above all, Jaycock shows the reader what the antithesis of a mission-command leader looks like and the costs of a micromanagement style, and reinforces a notion that command, control and leadership are not synonymous.

MAJ LUKE C. BOWERS